

# How accurate are community perceptions of crime problems in NSW?

Jackie Fitzgerald

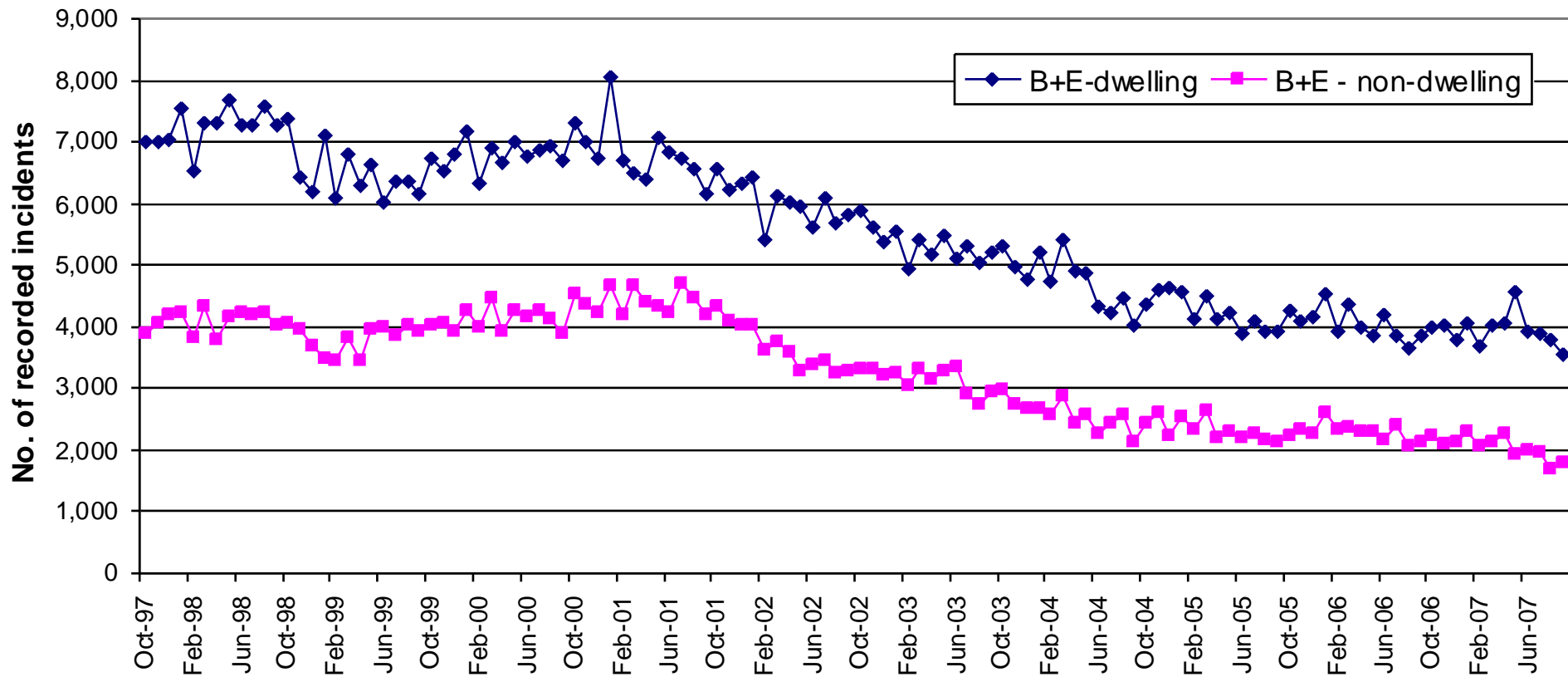
NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and  
Research

# Common attitudes towards the criminal justice system

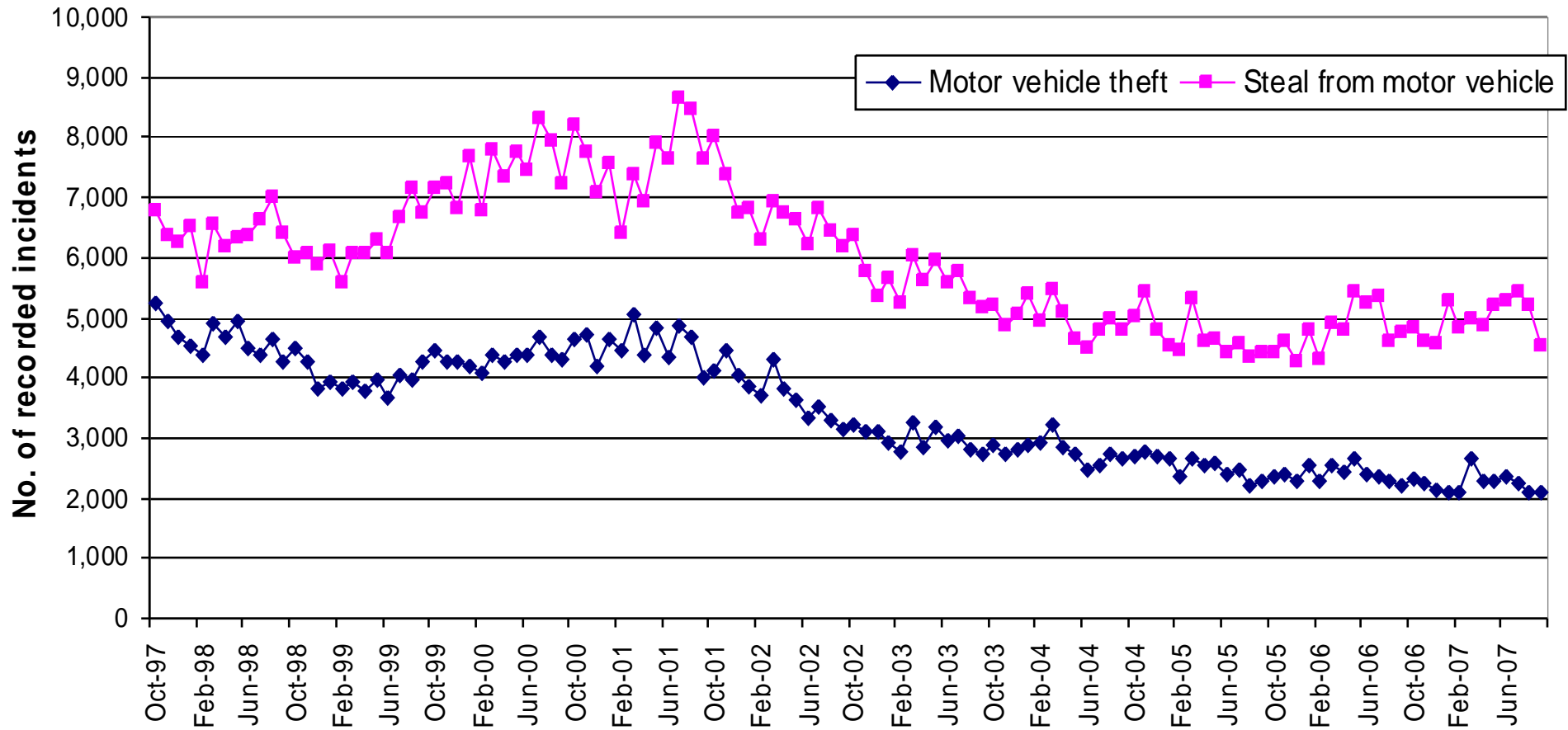
- People tend to have:
  - Inaccurate perceptions of crime levels
  - Confidence in the Police
  - Little confidence in the courts and legal system
  - A perception that sentencing is too lenient
  - A perception that the criminal justice system does not meet the needs of victims

# Has property crime increased, decreased or stayed stable in the past 10 years?

## Incidents of break and enter, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07

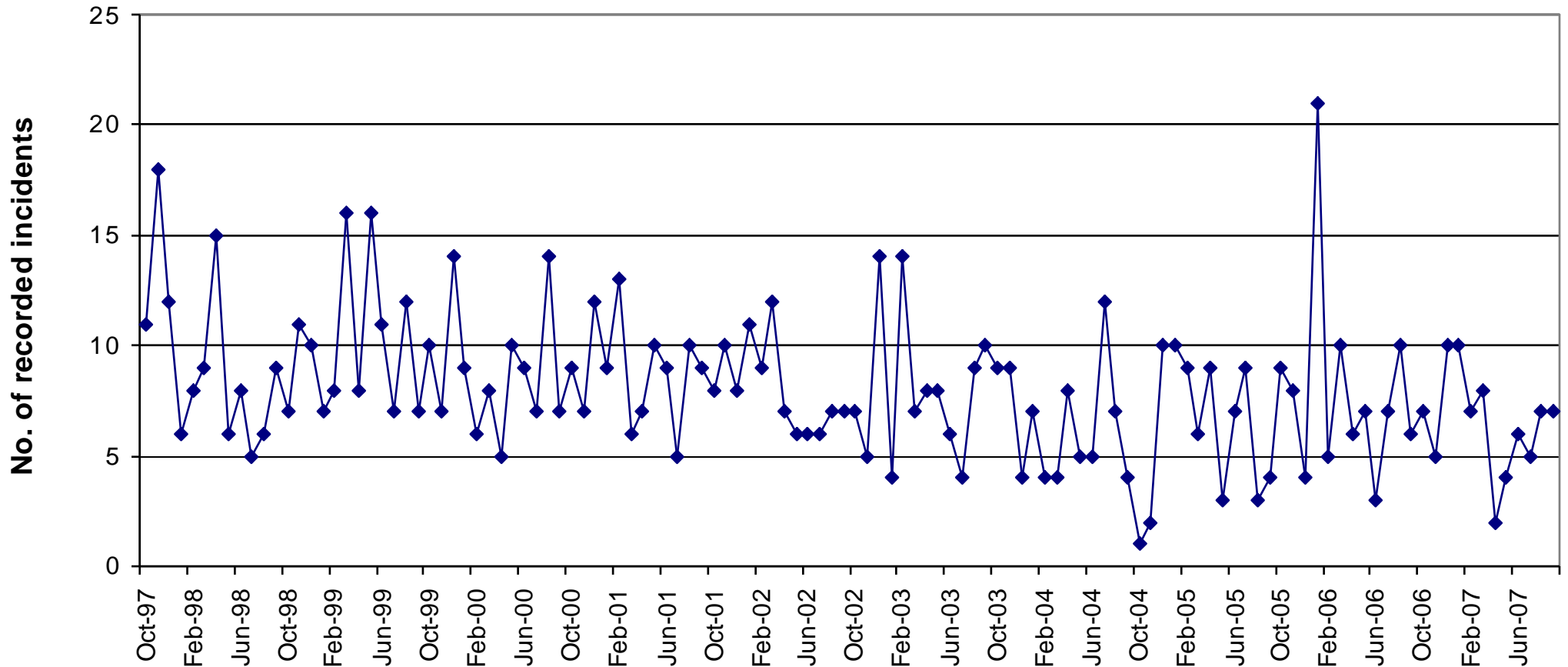


# Incidents of car theft, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07



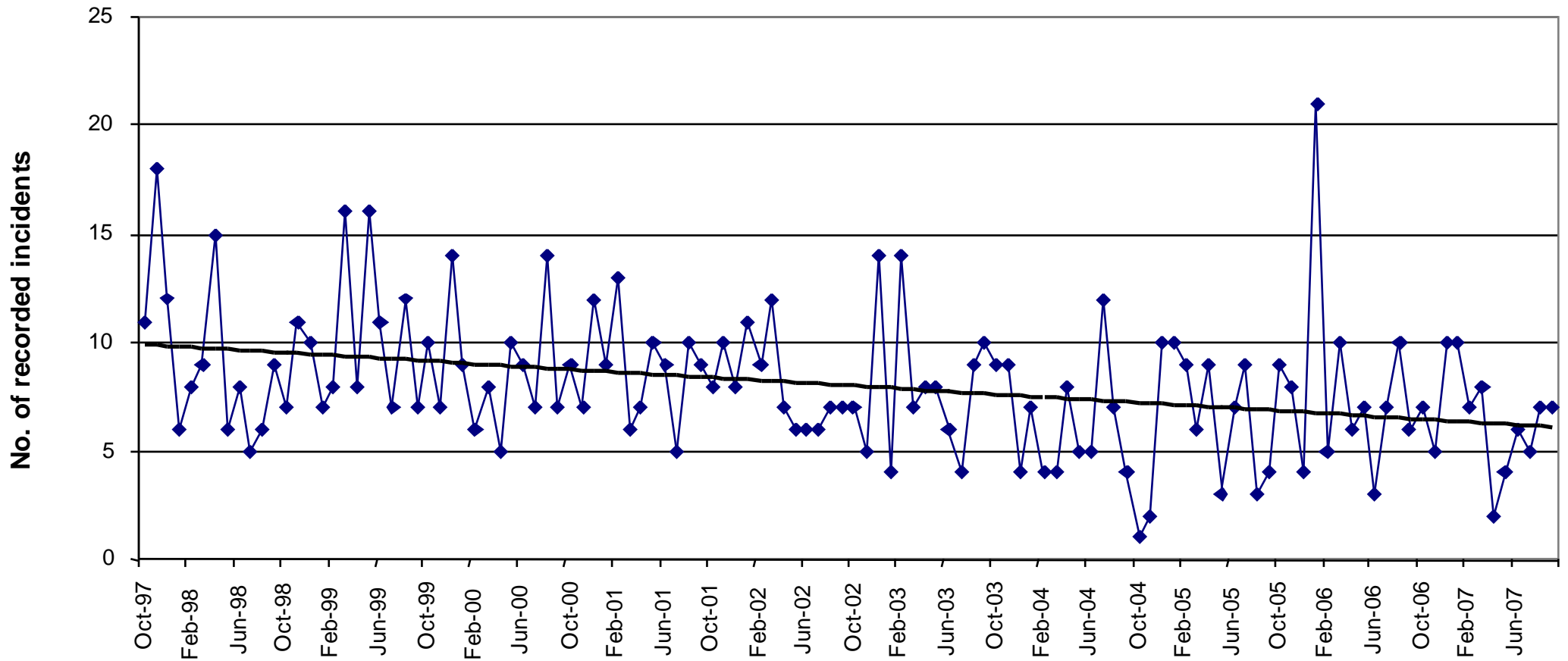
# Has violent crime increased, decreased or stayed stable in the past 10 years?

## Incidents of murder, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07

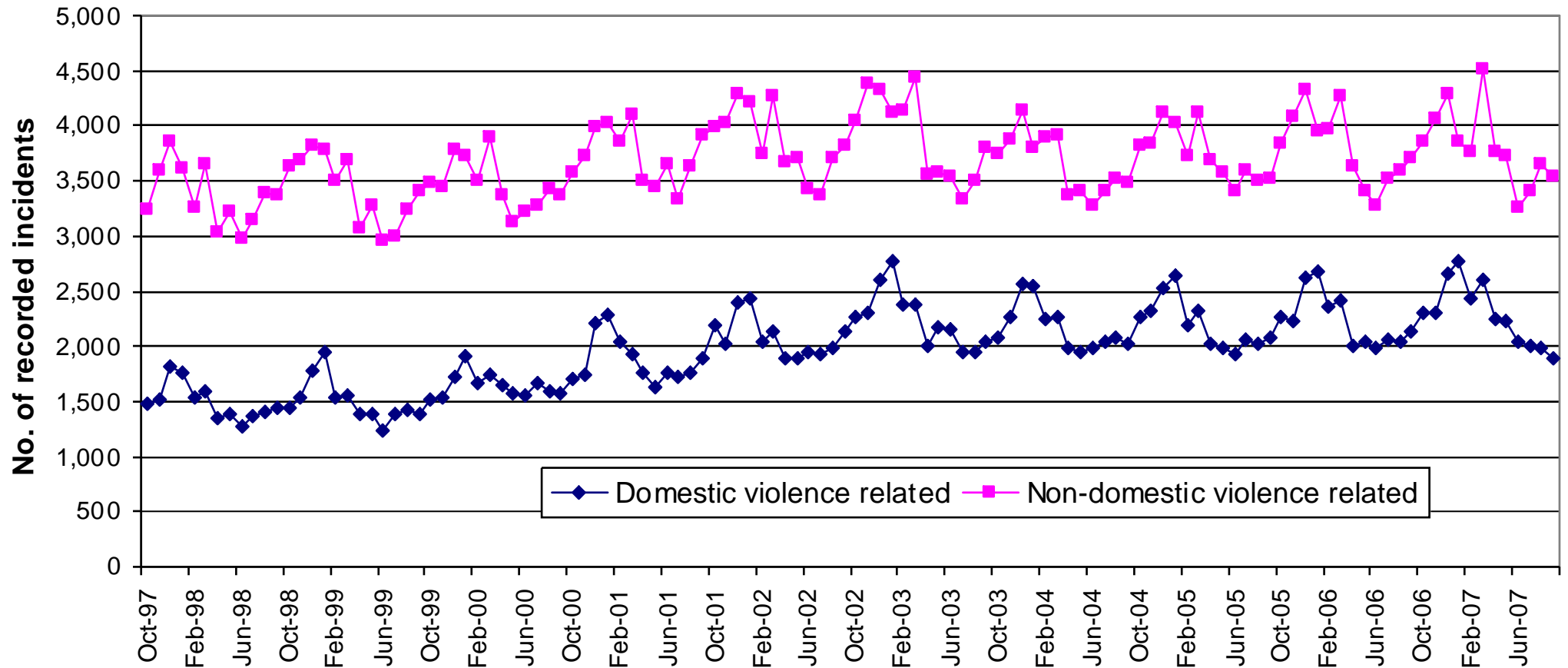


# Has violent crime increased, decreased or stayed stable in the past 10 years?

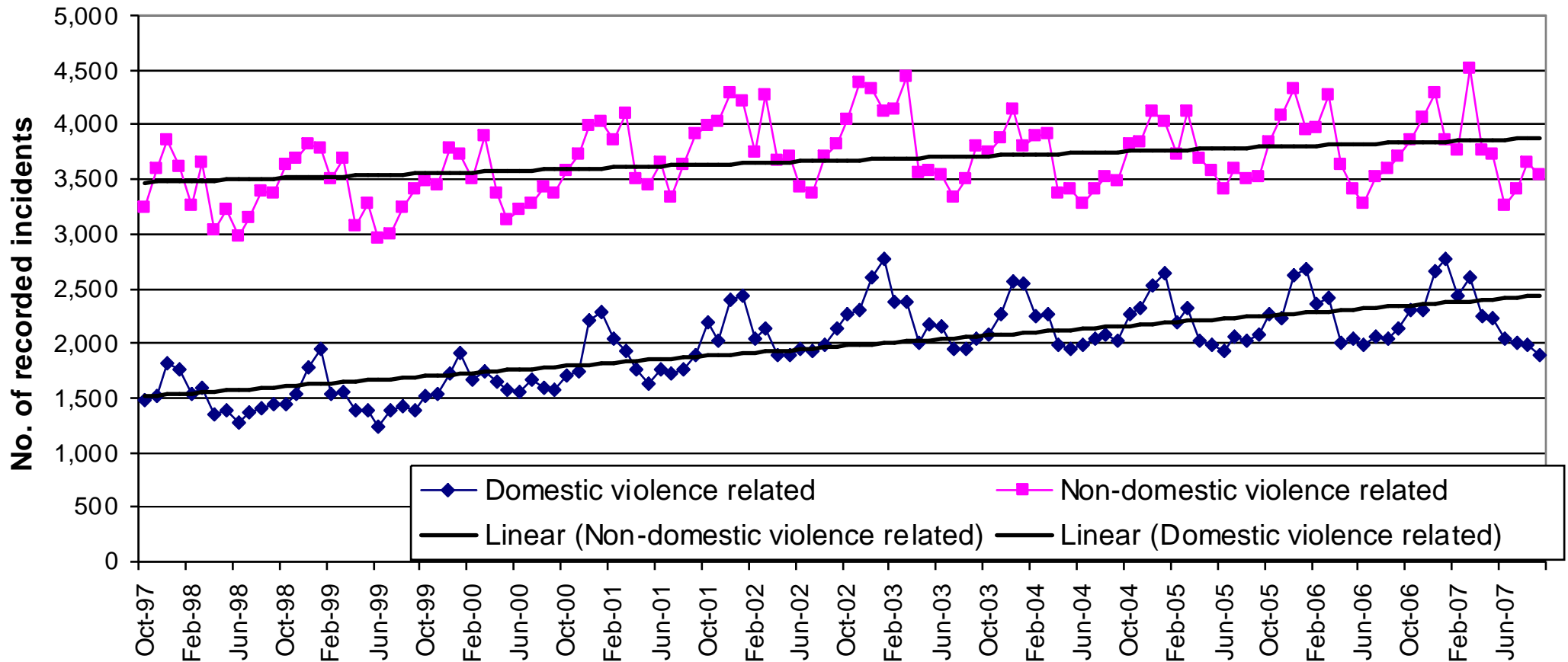
## Incidents of murder, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07



# Incidents of assault, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07



# Incidents of assault, NSW, Oct 97 to Sept 07



# Where is crime high?

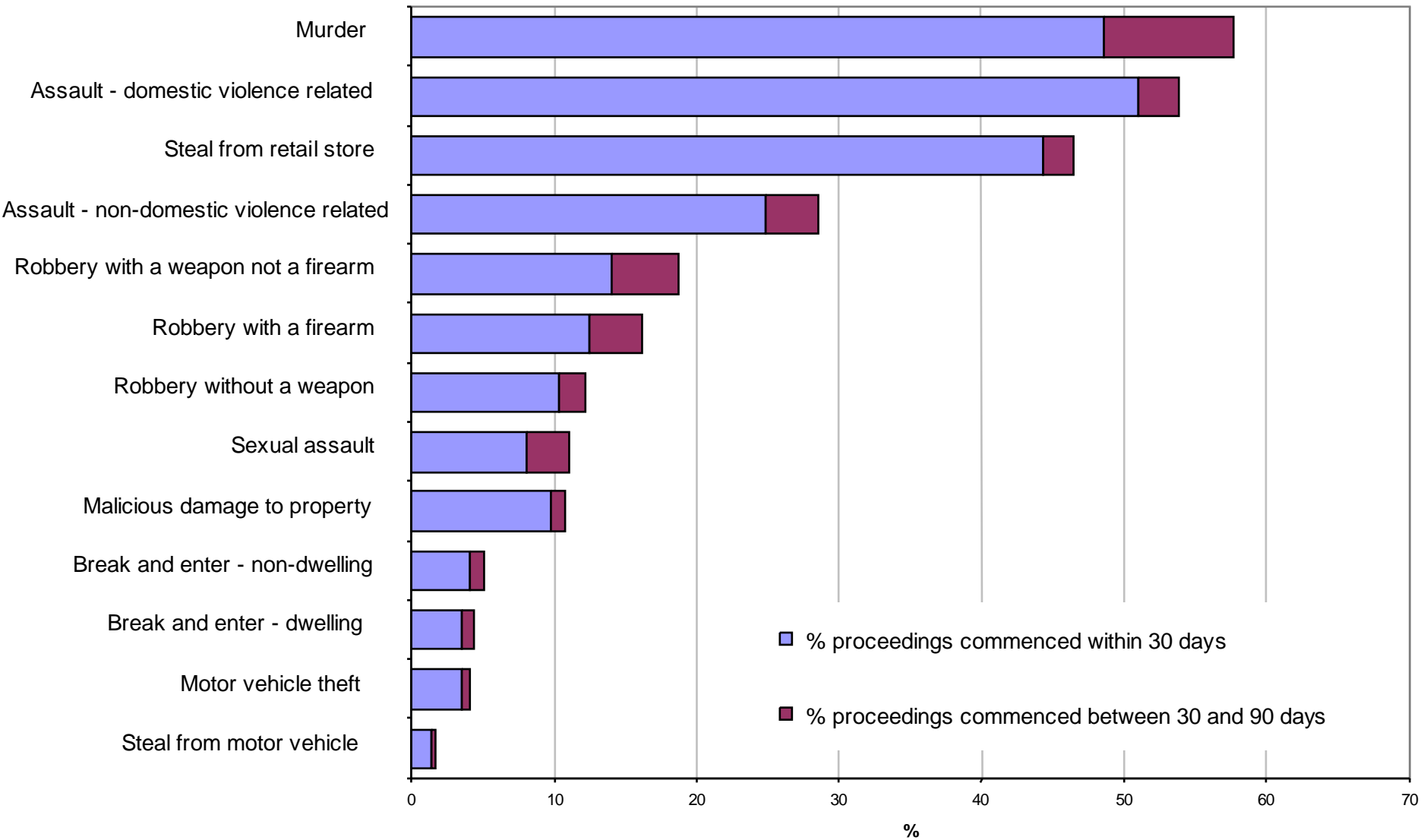
- Assault and sexual assault are highest in regional areas
- Property crime tends to be higher in urban areas
- Robbery is highly concentrated in urban areas

# In Sydney...

- Councils with generally high rates of crime:
  - Inner West - Ashfield, Strathfield, Burwood
  - Inner Sydney – Sydney LGA, Marrickville
  - Central West – Parramatta, Auburn
  - Outer South Western Sydney - Campbelltown
- Councils with generally low rates of crime:
  - Central Northern Sydney – Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai, Baulkham Hills
  - Northern Beaches – Pittwater, Warringah
  - Lower Northern Sydney – Hunters Hill, Willoughby

# Do you have confidence in the police?

## POLICE CLEAR UP RATE



# Do the courts respect the rights of people accused of committing crimes?

- Where are most defendants dealt with
  - Local Court 98% (135,574 people in 06)
  - District Court 2% (3,371 people in 06)
  - Supreme Court 0.06% (97 people in 06)
- What proportion of people appearing in court are legally represented?
  - Local Court 54%
  - District & Supreme Court 100%

# How effective are the courts in bringing people who commit crimes to justice?

- The conviction rate in 2006 was 87%
  - Local Court 87%
  - District Court 84%
  - Supreme Court 75%

# How can it be so high?

- Most people plead guilty
  - Local Court                      58%  
(plus 20% are convicted in their absence)
  - District Court                      75%
  - Supreme Court                      33%

# What are the most common offences in court?

- Road & traffic offences 32%
- Acts intended to cause injury 13%
- Against justice procedures 12%
- Theft 12%
- Public order 7%
- Drugs 5%
- Malicious damage 5%
- Sexual offences 1%
- Homicide 0.1%

# Do you think sentences are too lenient?

What proportion of offenders receive a sentence of imprisonment?

- Total 8%
  - Local Court 6%
  - District Court 66%
  - Supreme Court 86%

# However ... imprisonment differs by offence

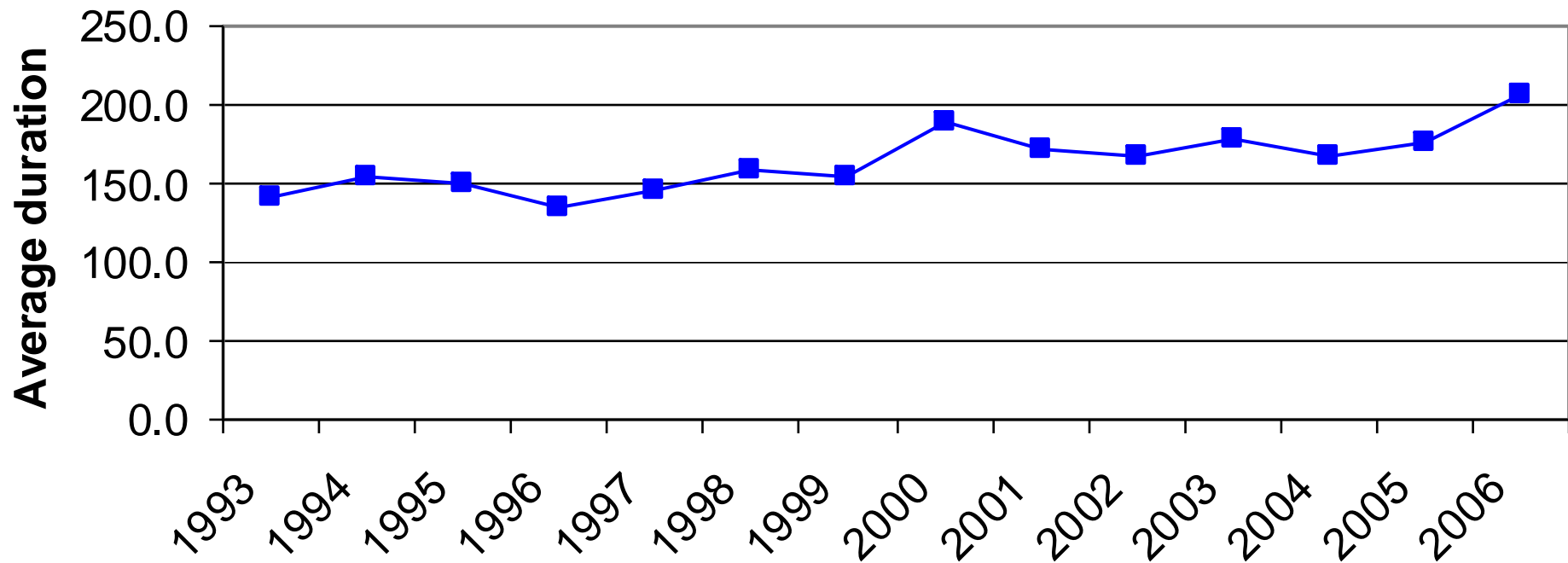
- Percentage imprisoned for:
  - Murder 100%
  - Sexual assault 44%
  - Robbery 40%
  - Break and enter 39%
  - Assault 12%
  - Other theft 14%
  - Public order 4%
  - Road/traffic 2%

# If not prison, what are the most common penalties?

- Fines 45%
- Bond 27%
- Suspended sentence 5%
- Community Service 4%

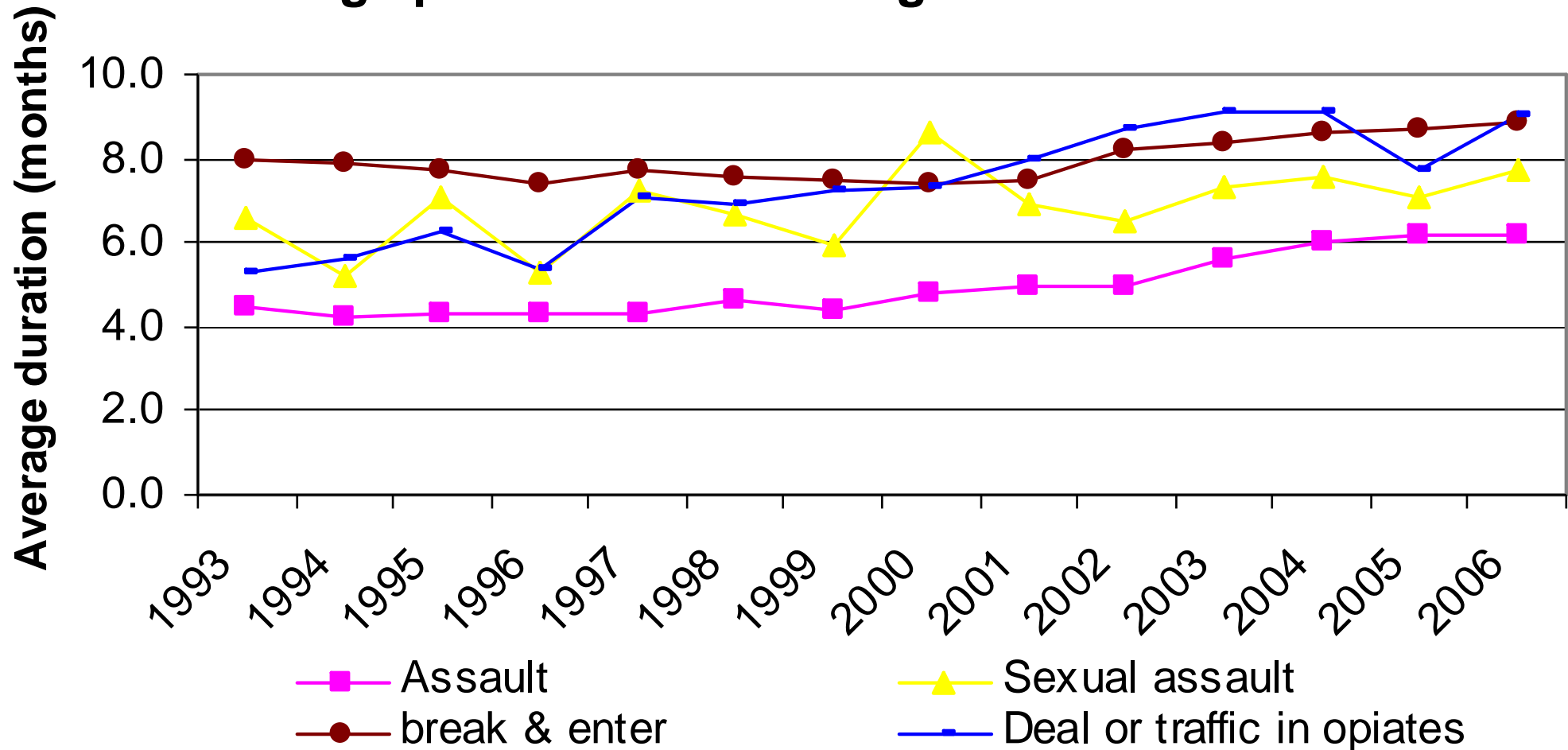
# Are prison sentences getting longer or shorter?

**Average duration in months of prison sentences for murder**



# and in the Local Court ....

## Average prison sentence length in Local Courts



# Does the criminal justice system deals with matters promptly?

The median delay from first appearance to finalisation is:

	Defended hearings	Plea matters
– Local Court	121 days	21 days
– District Court	326 days	146 days
– Supreme Court	386 days	323 days

# How many defendants are repeat offenders?

The proportion of people found guilty in court who have a prior record:

Local Court	59%
District & Supreme Court	71%

Again it varies by offence:

Driving	50% have a prior
Robbery	83% have a prior